

To Whom It May Concern,

Centrally located in Mauritania and at the end of one of its primary highways, Tidjikja remains one of the more isolated cities in the country. Despite this, the city features a vibrant and developed community and great possibilities for development work. As the capital of the Tagant region, the city is home to up to 10,000 people, depending on the season. Its scattered date palmeries and rocky outcrops are a draw for many Mauritaniens seeking to escape from Nouakchott or other large cities. When not playing host to visiting Mauritaniens, the city enjoys a peaceful, but steady hum of activity. The market is abuzz daily with locals and vegetable women mingling as they hawk their produce, much of it grown by local cooperatives

Each day, the students gather at one of the nine primary schools or two high schools, one of which is combined with a middle school. These are spread out among the twelve different quarters. Though gender remains a factor in many of the activities of each school, they are all co-ed. Furthermore, none of the schools are segregated by race, either *de facto* or *de officio*.

The town's oldest quarter, El Qadima, is about 450 years old. Though mostly reduced to rubble, a beautiful mosque still stands and the area retains an ancient mystic. There are at least eleven other mosques in the city which are maintained by the government, and two other mosques are being constructed to help the city's exploding population. The Islamic League has a small influence in the city insofar as they help run the Koranic schools. There are two Koranic schools in town where children learn some basic Arabic and sections of the Koran as well as the tenets of Islamic law before continuing on to primary school.

While featuring a relatively homogenous white Moor population, Tidjikja remains progressive in its operations and open to foreigners. Its citizens and leaders are particularly excited about this project and are willing to make considerable strides to see to its success. In arranging this project, Seth Luxenburg, a Peace Corps Environmental Education Volunteer, has been in communication with several members of the community and its leadership. They include the local representative of the Ministry of Education, several school inspectors and directors, the head the Parent Teacher's Association, the director of the Center for Continuing and Professional Studies, and the Mayor's office. If approved for this project, children from this otherwise isolated area will develop skills to put them in contact with the global community.

We hope you will consider the city and population of Tidjikja in selecting a community recipient for your program. We look forward to working with the Cornell University OLPC team. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,
Colleen Laurence, Tidjikja